

Concord-Alewife Planning Study

Meeting Notes: March 10, 2004 Committee Meeting

Committee Members Present: Al Wilson, Mitch Goldstein, Hom Sack, Joe Barrell, Pat Goddard

City of Cambridge Staff: Iram Farooq, Susan Glazer, Stuart Dash, Susanne Rasmussen, Taha Jennings

Consultants: David Dixon, Ron Mallis, David Black

After welcome and introductions by Susan Glazer, Susanne Rasmussen provided a transportation overview including a Level of Service (LOS) analysis.

Critical Sums

David Black led a presentation and discussion regarding critical sums analysis. He explained that critical sums are a way of determining how much a road can handle in terms of the number of cars.

He noted that there are basically two options to increase the capacity:

1. Add lanes of traffic
2. Add time to a cycle

There is a 30% reduction in traffic generated under new zoning as compared to existing zoning. It was noted that the traffic analysis is a comparison of generated *new* trips from study area, and it is beyond the scope of this study to address background traffic growth.

There was a question regarding why the improvement seemed to be so much better at the Ground Round rotary, while the overall improvement seems minimal. David explained that rotaries don't act like normal intersections for this type of analysis because of the inability to rely on the timing of signals. Generally, there is a constant threshold number applied for rotaries. Furthermore, the purpose of the exercise was not to reduce overall traffic numbers. There was some discussion on how the numbers shown translate into "real life" situations.

Susanne Rasmussen updated the committee on traffic and transportation issues under analysis:

- Blanchard Road traffic calming
- Blanchard Road between Concord Avenue and Grove Street study
- Experimental changes for crossing at Concord Avenue and Spinnelli Way
- Walkway on Smith Place on schedule for Spring 2004
- Roadways within the quadrangle area

Iram Farooq noted that there had been some concern expressed by committee members regarding the Adley property adjacent to the Highlands. Particularly, the recent purchase of the property and future development plans as well as, 21E environmental issues, and connections to Loomis Street.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

David Dixon presented some information on Transfer of Development Rights and how to make them tangible as part of the plan for Concord Alewife. Someone stated that TDR seems unlikely to be used and asked if it has ever been used in Cambridge. Staff noted that TDR had been used between two sites with the same owner but not yet between owners in Cambridge. There was some concern regarding potential negative impacts

for residents that live near the shopping center. It was noted, in response, that the shopping center is not the only area that will be in a TDR “receiving” district. Development rights can also be transferred to the Triangle and parts of the Quadrangle. There was concern about the possibility of an owner selling development rights and leaving what is left on their property “as is” including any negative features (ie pollution, inappropriate parking, lack of green space). This was noted as an important question, which merits further thought. Someone asked if property rights can be bought without public input or review, why should review be required to build at the TDR “receiving” site? It was also asked if it is possible to have a real estate lawyer explain the implementation of a TDR program. Finally, there was concern on whether a TDR program in the area would negatively effect the traffic calculations and estimates, which have been presented so far, especially at problem intersections.

Public Comment:

Someone asked if the TDR process would be a large percentage of the total development that takes place in the area. In response, it was stated that there is the potential for 10% to 15%, although realistically it would be more like 5% to 10%.

It was pointed out that TDR is an option, but there is concern that a potential buyer of development rights will wait to see what can be done (approved by the City) before paying for rights, which could take years. Why not use eminent domain to layout roads?

TDR was noted as a creative way to help address concerns of small landowners in the study area.

There was a question on how the traffic analysis can be explained to the layperson? And further, that the analysis should include intersections of Route 16 and Massachusetts Avenue and Route 16 and Huron Avenue. There will be significant cut through traffic into neighborhoods as traffic in the study area increases. Why wasn't AM peak included in the analysis?

It was stated that the height zones shown seem arbitrary. More height should be allowed without having to use TDR.

Someone else stated that infrastructure should come first. Also, that a decrease in the supply of land will increase demand in the area.

Someone commented that parking lots in the triangle are in a floodplain.

There was a question regarding whether the estimated build out was calculated using only base zoning or does it take into account zoning allowed through special permit?

It was suggested that legal counsel be used to discuss any loopholes.